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RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 4488  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 1761  
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 1781  
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 3973  
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 4392  
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [MASS](#) [MARR](#) [BL](#)  
SUBJECT: MANPADS: EX-PRESIDENT RODRIGUEZ ON THE DEFENSIVE

REF: A. LA PAZ 2763 (2005)  
[1](#)B. LA PAZ 2983 (2005)  
[1](#)C. LA PAZ 3167 (2005)  
[1](#)D. LA PAZ 3634 (2005)  
[1](#)E. LA PAZ 92

Classified By: Ambassador David N. Greenlee for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (S/NF) Summary: Congress will soon decide whether to approve criminal charges against ex-President Rodriguez for the transfer of MANPADS to the United States for destruction in October 2005. Given the upcoming vote, Rodriguez is ramping up his rhetoric, again denying that he approved the transfer (and alleging the Embassy was complicit in failing to inform him of it) and asserting that if he's found guilty, Washington will share the blame. Embassy representatives have said publicly that the USG complied in good faith with GOB requests for help in disposing of outdated military equipment; Rodriguez challenged the Embassy August 20 to come forward with proof of such a request. As the pressure on Rodriguez mounts, he will likely continue to look for ways to avoid taking the fall for the transfer, even if that means placing the blame squarely on us. End summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) In the next few weeks, Congress will decide whether to approve the GOB's legal case against former President Rodriguez for the transfer of MANPADS to the United States for destruction in October 2005. Congress' mixed commission (comprised of members of both houses) has the case but has not yet placed it on the agenda for debate. Two opposition parties (Podemos and National Unity) have pledged to oppose MAS efforts to prosecute Rodriguez; if that holds, Rodriguez should have the political support needed to derail the case.

[1](#)3. (S/NF) Given the upcoming vote, Rodriguez is ramping up his rhetoric, denying August 17 that he approved the MANPADS transfer and alleging the Embassy was complicit in failing to inform him of it. Rodriguez asserted that if he's found guilty, Washington will share the blame and "shouldn't leave us hanging." (Comment: Ministry of Defense officials told us following the transfer that Rodriguez personally approved it, and Embassy officers listened to the Minister of Defense briefing Rodriguez by telephone moments before the written agreement was signed in October 2005 (reftels D and E). Rodriguez has said publicly that he was in agreement with the destruction of the missiles, but not with their removal for

that purpose from Bolivia. End comment).

¶4. (SBU) The Ambassador has said publicly that the USG complied in good faith with GOB requests for help in disposing of outdated military equipment pursuant to OAS resolution 2145 (6/7/05). On August 20, Rodriguez again publicly challenged the Embassy to come forward with proof of such a GOB request, claiming that as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, he never solicited U.S. assistance. He further said that Embassy officials told him in October that it was "now or never" if Bolivia wanted to dispose of the missiles.

¶5. (S/NF) Comment: Rodriguez has expressed gratitude for our attempts to assist him with short-term employment (both here and in Washington). However, as the pressure mounts in coming weeks, Rodriguez will likely continue to look for ways to avoid taking the fall for the transfer, even if that means placing the blame squarely on us. When asked, we will reiterate our policy of not commenting publicly on security matters. End comment.  
GREENLEE